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SUBJECT: UNGA/C-5: PATTERN OF CONFERENCE: DELEGATES DISCUSS URGENT STAFFING NEEDS, USE OF CONFERENCE FACILITIES, AND PROBLEMS WITH DOCUMENTATION SERVICES

REF: USUN 845

**¶1. SUMMARY:** The Fifth Committee formally convened for the introduction of agenda item 135, Pattern of Conferences, on 16 October. A perceived lack of conference support for regional groups was a key concern articulated on the statements by the G77/China and the African Group. Professional staffing shortages, particularly in Nairobi, and concerns regarding demographic transition amongst language staff in particular was noted by many speakers as a high priority. Other issues identified during the formal meeting included a need to make documentation services more efficient, a lack of translation for Human Rights Council reports, and the importance of punctuality. Cuba and Iran criticized the United States for its perceived past misuse of conference services. The U.S. did not deliver a statement on this agenda item. END SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

**¶2.** The agenda item titled pattern of conferences encompasses all items having to do with conference management, such as the scheduling of meetings, submission and issuance of documents, and provision of conference services. Discussion in the Fifth Committee regarding the pattern of conferences is framed by the report and draft resolution prepared by the 21-member Committee on Conferences, of which the United States is a member (reftel).

FORMAL STATEMENTS

**¶3. DEMAND FOR TIMELY REPORTS AND DOCUMENTATION:** A recurring item in the statements delivered was the perennial problem of late issuance of documents, particularly for the Fifth Committee. Sudan, speaking on behalf of the G77 and China, stated that "The late issuance of reports remains a matter of concern to the Group of 77 and China. Timely issuance of documents in all the six official languages is of great importance to the work of the Organization." Sudan further expressed its hope that the Fifth Committee could reach "a stage where the program of work is determined by the importance accorded to an item by Member States and not by the date on which reports are issued and made available for introduction to Member States."

**¶4. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:** Several delegations noted dissatisfaction with the translation of reports produced in the Human Rights Council. Syria registered its "deep concern" over the lack of translation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) documents into all six official languages. Cuba noted the importance of translating these documents, noting that the UPR was "established to avoid the repetition of shameful situations leading to the

disappearance of the discredited Human Rights Commission" and suggesting that the Secretariat play a deeper role in nurturing the organization in all ways possible.

**¶15. CONCERNs REGARDING UTILIZATION OF CONFERENCE SERVICES:**  
Several delegations, including Sudan on behalf of the G77 and China and Angola on behalf of the African Group, complained about the decrease in the number of meetings of regional groups for which conference services were available.

Regarding the use of conference resources when provided, Pakistan noted the importance of punctuality and bemoaned the waste of limited conference resources through tardiness.

(Comment: The problem of inefficient use of conference resources is a real one; in fact, this meeting began forty minutes late and ran ten minutes over. End comment)

**¶16. CUBA AND IRAN CRITICIZED THE U.S. OVER CONFERENCE USE:** In a thinly-veiled reference to the United Against Nuclear Iran event that was sponsored by USUN and hosted at the UN last year, Cuba stated its "strong rejection to the use of UN facilities by some States with the cooperation with various authorities of the Secretariat to undertake clearly hostile actions against other Member States." Furthermore, Cuba claimed that such actions "damage the reputation and credibility of the United Nations and question the professionalism and neutrality of the Secretariat." Iran, referring to the same event, reminded delegates of previous resolutions articulating the proper use of UN facilities.

**¶17. STAFF VACANCIES AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION:** Some delegations also raised issues regarding the large number of vacancies in language staff, as well as the problem of

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demographic transition. Angola, on behalf of African Group, suggested that some positions be classified at a higher level, that additional incentives be added to positions in Nairobi, and to extend training programs in Africa. Mexico, speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, pointed out that twenty per cent of the workforce in the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) will be retiring in the next four years and urged DGACM to find ways of filling the vacancies.

LOOKING AHEAD

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**¶18. Comment:** All of the issues raised in the formal statements were addressed by the Committee on Conferences in the draft resolution submitted to the Fifth Committee. Every element of the draft resolution has been adopted informally by the Fifth Committee except for the calendar of conferences. At issue is the schedule for the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee during which the UN peacekeeping budget is debated. Although the U.S., the EU, and other delegations support amending the calendar to ensure that there is adequate time to receive and examine the reports necessary to discuss financing of peacekeeping operations, the G77 opposes any change because of changes to the schedule of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, which traditionally convenes after the completion of the second resumed session. End comment.

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